

IS THE HOLY SHROUD AUTHENTIC?

Is the Holy Shroud, the icon traditionally attributed to the body of Christ, true or is it an artistic reproduction? An image type analysis makes us understand that...

During the 1980s it had a lot of echo media and significant reflections on public opinion the debate about the truthfulness or authenticity of the relic known as "Holy Shroud", a sheet of linen on which the image would be printed of the body of Christ.

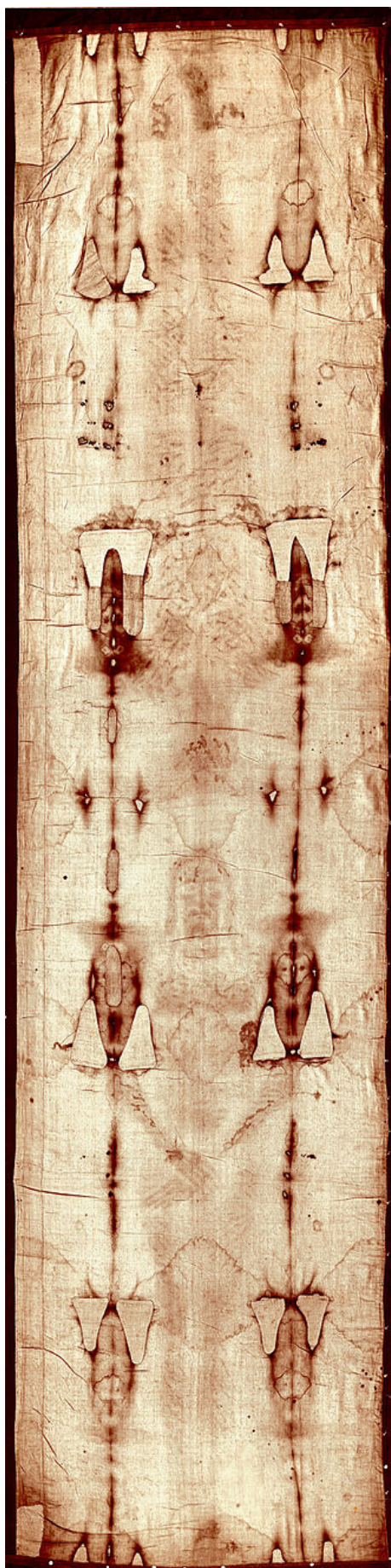
The word "shroud" comes from the Greek σινδών (sindon), and indicates a large tissue similar to a good quality linen sheet or another fabric compatible with that use.

The Turin Shroud is 4.41 meters wide by 1.13. Its thickness is about 0.34 millimeters, therefore very thin. The weight is estimated at 2.450 kg. The fabric is hand-spun linen.

It is currently kept at the Duomo of Turin; its last public exposition is of 2015.

His story is obviously controversial; it was repeatedly denied its authenticity, referring to the fact that its first historical citation is late (it comes named in the western documents for the first vault in the 14th century), but also the recent exams to radiocarbon 14 - which make it possible to assess the age of an archaeological find with a margin of acceptable error up to 50,000 years B.C. through the calculation of the atomic decay of organic material -, which had dated the Shroud at a time no earlier than Middle Ages, have been strongly contested.

Among the supporters of the authenticity of the Shroud there is who traces it back to the land of Israel at the I century A.D.: so far, among the surviving artifacts, it has not been found some specimens of fabric of the part of the shroud that shows the frontal aspect of the body



impressed on it of a period completely compatible or similar to the

The Shroud photographed by Giuseppe Enrie (1931). At the top the dorsal image (upside down), at the bottom the frontal one. On the sides of the images you can see the burns of the fire of 1532 and the related patches (removed in 2002)

Shroud, that is, a linen sheet woven a "fishbone" with a warp-weft ratio of 3:1 as for that conserved in Turin.

There are those who claim that the Shroud would be identified with the mandylion (from the Greek "μανδύλιον", "cloth") or "image of Edessa", a reproduction of Jesus highly venerated by the Christians of the East and disappeared in 1204.

The mandylion was initially preserved in Edessa of Mesopotamia (now Urfa, in Turkey); in the 10th century it was moved to Constantinople.

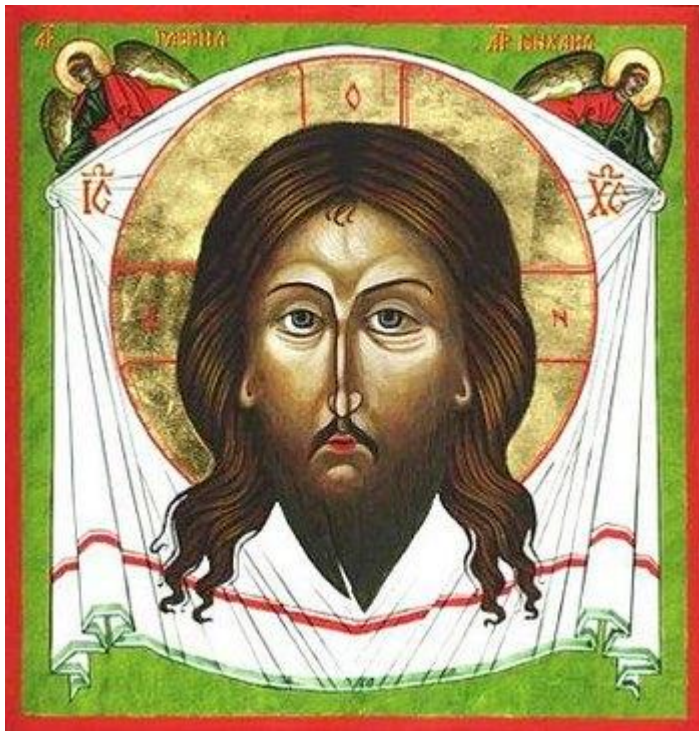
Its traces were lost in 1204, when the city was sacked during the Fourth Crusade.

If today's Shroud is the same as the "image of Edessa", it would be necessary hypothesize that it has been exhibited in the East folded several times so as to show only the part of the face and not all its entirety (it is more than 4 meters wide by over 1 meter).

The Shroud has recently undergone a series of restorations: in 2002 it was subjected to a conservative intervention; the burnt parts were removed during a fire in 1532 and the subsequent patches made by the nuns of Chambéry. Even a support sheet (the so-called "Holland cloth") applied in 1534 has been replaced.

It has also been mechanically stretched to eliminate creases and finally cleaned of dust.

The fundamental question to understand for what concerns the Shroud is the nature of the image imprinted on it.



A painting inspired by the mandylion

There are two hypotheses: or it is a "contact" image with liquids that have passed from the body to linen (most likely blood, because the image is dark in color while the sweat itself would be obviously evaporated leaving a minimum colored trace) or, a little hypothesis "disturbing" and quite unusual, it would be a "photograph"... made from within the body to the outside.

Let's explain some passages: if it were an image obtained by contact, first of all dilation of the "printed" limbs on the cloth would certainly have generated images enlarged and disproportionate compared to the original dimensions of the limbs, and this in particular way to the

face. The man's face of the Shroud does not present these features. Also, from the back side - because the Shroud is made up of both the front and the back of the body - the one on which all the weight was pressed evidently, it would have had a greater intensity of the image, but it does not seem so; this would be a further proof that leads to the so-called "photographic" origin of the Shroud.

According to the anatomopathologist Baima Bollone, the imprinted figure corresponds to that of a crucified man stiffened by "rigor mortis": the somatic structure is fixed in an unnatural position for a living body and everything the semblant is affected by a situation of rigidity.

The subject portrayed is that of an adult man, with a beard and hair long.

The image is also hardly visible to the naked eye and can only be perceived at a certain distance (one-two meters, while approaching it seems to disappear; it is the same effect present for example in another famous image, those Marian of Guadalupe, of the 16th century).

On the Shroud there are also 120 signs of wounds distributed along the entire surface, which, according to the "authenticists", i.e. the supporters of the authenticity of the relic, would have been caused by the flagrum, the Roman scourge used to whip Jesus.

In correspondence of the scalp, numerous punctate and rounded imprints can be seen probably generated by spikes and from which different colings of blood depart.

Supporters of authenticity identify them with the wounds produced by the crown of thorns which, according to the Gospel account, was placed on the head of Christ.

As regards the stature, on the other hand, it should be noted how the Savoy, the Princely House in Turin and owner of the Shroud until its donation, used to give their guests ribbons whose length corresponded

at the height of the man imprinted on the Shroud, measured in 183 cm.

The same height was indicated by the historian Byzantine Nicephorus Callistus in the 14th century: this coincidence is considered by supporters of authenticity as a clue in favor of the hypothesis that the Shroud of Turin is the same that was preserved in Constantinople up to 1204, precisely the "sheet of Edessa".

From the linen fabric exams and from other information taken from the imprinted image it is possible to deduce that the silhouette "in negative" present on the sheet would be the result of a light or something like that that would have "print" from inside to outside on the fibers of Shroud fabric the shape of the body maintaining the proportions of the limbs.

This fact would lead to an incredible novelty in the archeology of the genre and would reveal one ability of a body, however, already dead to emit light and to give life to a physical process of a certain intensity and persistence.

At this point this it would be a simple detail, if it were really the body of the Christ.

Other data of the imprinted figure confirm the hypothesis that it may be precisely the image of the body of Jesus: the presence of holes in the hands, in particular on the right hand resting on the left hand; the forehead injuries compatible with those of holes generated by the crown of thorns applied to Jesus by Roman soldiers; finally the flagellation wounds present all over the body, which they would do incline to the hypothesis that that would be the linen in which Jesus was wrapped in the tomb before his resurrection.

This conclusion would also lead to having to admit: that Jesus really existed; that that sheet has arrived more or less adventurously to us, for how many attempts or accidents it had to suffer during his "career"; that those signs confirm the mode of flagellation, crucifixion and death of Nazarene as attested by history and told in the Gospels,

as well as from the testimonies of the survivors and witnesses; which, above all, that image is not of a chemical nature (it is not transposed blood) but of a physical-luminous one.

The question of "inauthenticity", instead, that is the claim that it is a false or created relic specifically to mislead in some way the attention should be addressed from the side of the conclusions which would lead to such a hypothesis.

The debate on the alleged "falseness" of the Shroud, as of many other relics scattered throughout the world, would generally concern the question of "preciousness" of the same: while not keeping account of the obvious approach of faith that considered relics of great religious value also for their thaumaturgical function, it must be said that, especially after the year 1000, there was a notable presence in Europe of rebirth of communal realities, and in the case of new foundations of churches or religious communities tended to search for sacred remains that are also important to give prestige and authority to the project.